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## THE LAC DECLARATION ON PRINCIPLE 10

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The UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development reaffirmed that improving transparency, public participation and accountability mechanisms, is critical for sustainable development. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration contemplates these elements of good governance. Principle 10

provides that environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, that individuals shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment and that effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.



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**LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN (LAC) COUNTRIES** have been at the forefront of some of the most exciting developments on Principle 10; for example: the passage of new freedom of information laws in Brazil and Uruguay; the development of innovative approaches to recognize people's rights to participate in decisions about natural resources in Chile (new environment impact regulations) and in Jamaica (Forestry Act that promotes community participation), as well as the launch of innovative environmental justice mechanisms (new environmental adjudication processes in Ecuador). However progress has been uneven in the region.

The Rio +20 "Future we want" Outcome document expressly, "encouraged action at the regional level to implement Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration." The call to action has been taken up by 12 LAC States, including Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Trinidad and Tobago. These countries have signed on to the Principle 10 LAC Declaration which states:

*...we declare our willingness to launch a process to explore the feasibility of adopting a regional instrument, ranging from guidelines, workshops and best practices, to a regional convention open to all the countries in the region with the meaningful participation of all concerned citizens. Latin America and the Caribbean can and must take a meaningful step forward on this front.*

**THE PRINCIPLE 10 DECLARATION** moves the region a large step forward toward stronger environmental governance. Signatory governments have committed to drafting and implementing a Plan of Action 2012-14 for the elaboration of a regional instrument. The Plan of Action will include a mechanism to include civil society participation in the process of elaboration of the LAC Principle 10 instrument. The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is serving as the technical secretariat to the declaration. A Steering Committee composed of the governments of Chile, Dominican Republic and Mexico has been appointed and a Roadmap has been prepared for the entire process.

Civil society is working to promote the LAC Declaration on Principle 10 and has called for a legally binding instrument in order to:

- signal the commitment of LAC signatory States to environmental governance
- provide legal tools to secure the effective enjoyment of access rights
- channel development and technical assistance to strengthen institutional capacities
- foster greater political stability within countries and in the region
- establish the foundation for sustainable development governance

Today there is a real opportunity for both governments and civil society to promote good environmental governance through implementation of the LAC Principle 10 Declaration. The Declaration is still open for signature by other LAC countries, and it is expected that more States will join the process and lend increased vigor to this innovative approach to regional cooperation on environmental governance.

## THE ACCESS INITIATIVE

TAI is dedicated to improving citizens' access to environmental decision-making, strengthening the enforcement of environmental law and policy, combating corruption, and realizing human rights. Within the region, in the run-up to Rio+20, TAI partners were actively involved in the process of advocating that governments adopt an instrument for the region.

## CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

CIEL uses international law, institutions, and processes to protect the environment, promote human health, and create a just and sustainable world. Our work falls into four strategic areas: protecting the global environment and human health; reforming international economic law, policy, and institutions; promoting human rights and environmental justice; and strengthening expertise and capacities in environmental law. Throughout its history, CIEL has played a key leadership role in establishing a firm foundation of legal analysis to strengthen progressive efforts by civil society.

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